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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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09/981,756

10/19/2001

Tetsuya Araki

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EXAMINER

TARAE, CATHERINE MICHELLE

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3623

DATE MAILED: 02/15/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/981,756

Applicant(s)

ARAKI ET AL.

Examiner

C. Michelle Tarae

Art Unit

3623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 19 October 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- 1) ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - 2) ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - 3) ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>10/19/01, 3/2/04</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

1. The following is a Non-Final Office Action in response to the communication received on October 19, 2001. Claims 1-12 are now pending in this application.

Information Disclosure Statement

2. The examiner has reviewed the patents and publications supplied in the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) provided on October 19, 2001 and March 2, 2004.

Claim Objections

3. Claims 8 and 9 are objected to because of the following informalities: Claims 8 and 9 are redundant claims. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

5. Claims 1-7 and 10-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Kanaya et al. (U.S. 6,493,675).

As per claim 1, Kanaya et al. discloses in a workflow system that a plurality computers and a server connected to said computers are included and items are processed in said computers in accordance with a business process including one or more previously defined works, an item allocation method in said server comprising the steps of:

previously providing said server with an item extraction condition table including an item acquisition range condition and an item selection key (col. 13, lines 44-col. 14, line 28; Figures 5-7; Figure 6 is an example of a workflow management table that uses Work ID's and Work Flow ID's as item selection keys to identify the desired work activity. The workflow engine determines the next work activity based on the workflow definition, which uses the various ID's to define the work activity. The workflow tables reside on a server.);

receiving an item acquisition request from a computer included in said computers (col. 14, lines 49-51; Figure 9; The workflow management engine receives a process request from a user of the system. The process request extracts items from different tables to create a work activity depending on the type of request.);

extracting items satisfying said item acquisition range condition, based on said received item acquisition request and said item acquisition range condition; selecting one item from among said extracted items by using said item selection key; and transmitting said selected item said computer that transmitted said item acquisition request (col. 14, lines 49-58; col. 15, lines 7-40; items S10 and S12 in Figure 9 show that items are searched for in the workflow engine management table based on the type

of request and using the Work ID as a key. If the key matches, then the item is selected and added to the work information management table for the process request (i.e., work activity) to be executed.).

As per claim 4, Kanaya et al. discloses an item allocation method according to claim 1, wherein said item selection key is a value depending upon a client program that operates in each of said computers (col. 14, lines 29-43; Figures 5 and 8; Each client computer uses a system communications management program that is configured to communicate workflow data to the workflow engine management table generation program. Therefore, the selection key value must be a value that both the client and server programs understand.).

As per claim 6, Kanaya et al. discloses an item allocation method according to claim 4, wherein said value depending upon a client program that operates in each of said computers is a thread ID of the client program, a process ID of the client program, an object reference acquired from the client program, or an identifier of a connection formed from the client program to the server at time of said item request (col. 13, lines 53-65; The value is a Work ID, which identifies a work process.).

As per claim 10, Kanaya et al. discloses an item allocation method according to claim 1, wherein said item allocation method is applied to each of works of a business process stored in the server (Figure 5; The workflow engine is stored on the server. The workflow engine stores and manages business process data.).

Claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 11 and 12 recite substantially similar subject matter as claims 1, 4, 6 and 10 above. Therefore, claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 11 and 12 are rejected on the same basis as claims 1, 4, 6 and 10 above.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 8 and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kanaya et al. (U.S. 6,493,675) as applied above.

As per claims 8 and 9, Kanaya et al. does not expressly disclose an item allocation method according to claim 1, wherein said item selection key is either an IP address or an MAC address of each of said computers. However, Kanaya et al. does disclose the work ID being a unique serial number (col. 13, lines 53-54) as well as the ID of a workflow management engine (col. 13, lines 60-65) being used to identify the workflow engine on the server. It is old and well known that an IP/MAC address is a unique number that identifies a computer on a network. Therefore, at the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art for the system of Kanaya et al. to use an IP/MAC address as an item selection key since the system of Kanaya et al. already employs unique numbers as selection keys, and furthermore, an IP/MAC address could identify the computer from which a request is

being made or the computer that is to process the request, which further enhances the workflow management process of Kanaya et al. by enabling the tracking of more detailed information related to the workflow process.

Conclusion

8. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

- Bowman-Amuah (U.S. 6,529,948) discusses a multi-object fetch component;
- Hayashi et al. (U.S. 6,671,855) discusses a document workflow management system;
- Tsuiki et al. (U.S. 6,144,955) discusses a workflow management system; and
- Brandt et al. (U.S. 6,714,979) discusses the use of keys to extract data from tables.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to C. Michelle Tarae (formerly, C. Michelle Colon) whose telephone number is 571-272-6727. The examiner can normally be reached Monday – Friday from 8:30am to 5:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz, can be reached at 571-272-6729.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for

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published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should

you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic

Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Michelle Tarae".

C. Michelle Tarae
Patent Examiner
Art Unit 3623

January 30, 2006